

## INTRODUCTION

Until the early 1980s, the SDRWQCB's efforts to protect water quality and beneficial uses were directed primarily towards controlling point source discharges of waste from sewage treatment plants and industrial facilities. Pollution from such point source discharges has largely been controlled through stringent pollution control laws and the efforts of the SDRWQCB and other agencies. Ground water contamination, nonpoint sources of pollution (such as urban and agricultural runoff), and physical modifications to water bodies are now considered the greatest remaining threats to water quality and beneficial uses and will increasingly be the focus of the SDRWQCB's efforts in the coming years. Cumulative effects from all sources must now be considered in order for the SWRCB and RWQCBs to be truly effective in protecting water quality and beneficial uses.

The purpose of this document is to describe how the SDRWQCB will implement watershed management in the San Diego region, i.e. the SDRWQCB watershed management approach.

### ***Watershed Management Initiative***

In 1993 the SWRCB commenced an external review of the mandates and programs of the SWRCB and RWQCBs. The purpose of the review was to identify how best, in an era of shifting priorities and shrinking budgets, the SWRCB and RWQCBs could better meet their mandates to protect California's water resources. Based on this review, the 1995 Strategic Plan of the SWRCB and RWQCBs was developed. The Strategic Plan, which was updated in 1997, provides strategic direction to guide decision making over the next five to seven years. One of the strongest messages received from the strategic planning process was that the actions and decisions of the SWRCB and RWQCBs should be guided by a perspective that considers water quality related impacts within the context of entire watersheds. In response to this concern, the 1995 Strategic Plan included a special initiative called the "Watershed Management Initiative." The Watershed Management Initiative addresses issues related to watershed management, describes current regional efforts, and establishes an action plan to implement watershed management plans statewide.

### ***SDRWQCB Perspective***

The SDRWQCB is fully committed to implementing the Strategic Plan's statewide Watershed Management Initiative in the San Diego region. Watershed management represents a departure from the SDRWQCB's traditional approach to protecting the quality and beneficial uses of ground and surface waters. The SDRWQCB's traditional approach has been organized around separate state and federal programs, each of which was developed to address different types of pollutant sources and/or different types of receiving waters. Funding has been and continues to be allocated to the RWQCBs by program and/or activity. However, the goals and responsibilities of

various programs may be different, may overlap, and/or may leave gaps. Furthermore, funding allocated to various programs has not and does not necessarily correspond to actual water quality or beneficial use problems or threats or to the level of effort necessary to address those problems and threats. RWQCBs have little flexibility to direct funding to activities and locations where it will be most effective in addressing water quality and beneficial use problems and threats. Finally, accomplishments of the RWQCBs traditionally have been (and continue to be) measured in terms of program activities (or "bean counts"), such as numbers of permits issued, enforcement orders issued, compliance inspections conducted, and monitoring reports reviewed. While these activities are important tools for the RWQCBs, such "bean counts" seldom provide a meaningful or useful indication or measure of whether water quality standards have been achieved, whether water quality has improved, or whether beneficial uses have been maintained or restored.

Dealing with today's complex and intertwined water quality and beneficial use issues, which involve both point and nonpoint sources, requires a comprehensive, coordinated approach on the part of the SDRWQCB. The SDRWQCB must better integrate its programs and functions to more effectively bring different fields of expertise to bear and to promote a "teamwork" approach to solving water quality and beneficial use problems. The watershed management approach does not represent a new regulatory program, competing with or replacing existing SDRWQCB programs. Rather, the watershed management approach provides a framework to begin integrating existing SDRWQCB programs and activities and allocating resources so as to more effectively and efficiently address water quality and beneficial use issues.

The watershed management approach is based on the premise that many water quality and beneficial use problems are best solved by considering entire watersheds, or portions thereof, rather than considering only individual waters, discharges, discharge types, or political jurisdictions. This approach recognizes that water quality and beneficial uses may be affected by many different activities. These activities may occur throughout or only in certain parts of watersheds. These activities may occur near to or far from locations of known water quality or beneficial use problems. Watershed management addresses all of the water quality and beneficial use problems within and from a drainage area and all of the causes and sources of the problems. For this reason, watersheds can be thought of as "problemsheds," the areas in which water quality and beneficial use problems exist or originate.

The SDRWQCB recognizes that it cannot solve today's water quality and beneficial use problems alone. The involvement of all stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, must be actively sought to identify the highest priority issues and to achieve mutually beneficial solutions. Better use of the expertise, authority, and staff resources of other federal, state and local agencies is also essential. Resources of agencies across all levels of government need to be coordinated and integrated to

optimize use of staff resources and public dollars. For example, polluted runoff is intimately tied to land use. Since the SDRWQCB lacks direct land use control authority, it must increasingly look to agencies with land use control authority to coordinate land based strategies for the control of polluted runoff.

***USEPA Integrated Federal Grants Process***

In addition to the State's Watershed Management Initiative, the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has initiated a program called the Integrated Federal Grants Process for federal funding available under Clean Water Act Sections 104(b)(3), 106, 205(j) and 319. The goal of this effort is to direct federal and state funds towards priority water quality problems. This process involves developing a planning methodology for identification of the highest priority program needs, water quality problem areas, and watershed projects. USEPA will work with the SWRCB and RWQCBs to pool available federal and state grant funds and match the grant funds to the identified priorities. Implementation of the watershed management approach will provide a framework for the SDRWQCB to identify high priority water quality issues for integration into the USEPA and SWRCB integrated funding process.